

*In order to run a rigorous competition and obligate funds to grantees before December 31, 2012, the Department of Education (the Department) plans to waive formal rulemaking on this new program, pursuant to its authority in the General Education Provisions Act. However, the Department is very interested in your input. We encourage all interested parties to submit opinions, ideas, suggestions, and comments pertaining to the Race to the Top District (RTT-D) competition described below. Though the Department will not respond to comments, the Department will read and consider all comments in finalizing the RTT-D competition design.*

**Background:**

The Race to the Top State competition incentivized bold and comprehensive reform in elementary and secondary education and laid the foundation for unprecedented innovation. A total of 46 States and the District of Columbia put together comprehensive plans to implement college- and career-ready standards, use data systems to guide teaching and learning, evaluate and support teachers and school leaders, and turn around their lowest-performing schools. The Race to the Top District competition (RTT-D) will build on the lessons learned from the State-level competitions and support bold, locally directed improvements in teaching and learning that will directly improve student achievement and teacher effectiveness.

More specifically, RTT-D will reward those LEAs that have the leadership and vision to implement the strategies, structures and systems of support to move beyond one-size-fits-all models of schooling, which have struggled to produce excellence and equity for all children, to personalized, student-focused approaches to teaching and learning that will use collaborative, data-based strategies and 21<sup>st</sup> century tools to deliver instruction and supports tailored to the needs and goals of each student, with the goal of enabling all students to graduate college- and career-ready.

Successful LEAs will provide the information, tools, and supports that enable teachers to truly differentiate instruction and meet the needs of each child. These LEAs will have the policy and systems infrastructure, capacity, and culture to enable teachers, teacher teams and school leaders to continuously focus on improving individual student achievement. They will organize around the goal of each child demonstrating content and skills mastery and credentialing required for college and career and will allow students significantly more freedom to study and advance at their own pace - both in and out of school. As importantly, they will create opportunities for students to identify and pursue areas of personal passion-- all of this occurring in the context of ensuring that each student demonstrates mastery in critical areas identified in college- and career ready standards. LEAs successfully implementing this approach to teaching and learning will lay the modern blueprint for raising student achievement, decreasing the achievement gap across student groups, and increasing the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.

**Eligibility Criteria:**

1. Eligible applicants include only individual local educational agencies (LEAs) (as defined in this document) and consortia of LEAs.
  - a. LEAs may apply for all or a portion of their schools, for specific grades, or for subject area bands (e.g., lowest-performing schools, secondary schools, feeder pattern, middle school math, or preschool through third grade).
  - b. LEAs may join a consortium that includes LEAs across one or more states.
  - c. LEAs may only sign on to one Race to the Top District application.

2. Applicant(s) must annually serve a minimum of 2,500 participating students (as defined in this document). (For a consortium, this minimum number may be met by annually calculating all participating students across all participating LEAs.)
3. At least forty percent of participating students across all participating schools (as defined in this document) must be students from low-income families, based on eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch subsidies under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, or other poverty measures that LEAs use to make awards under section 1113(a) of the ESEA. If an applicant has not identified all participating schools at the time of application, it must provide an assurance that within 100 days of the grant that its participating schools (as defined in this document) will meet this standard.
4. Applicants must demonstrate a track record of commitment to the core education assurance areas (as defined in this document), including, for each LEA included in an application, an assurance signed by the LEA's authorized legal representative that--
  - a. The LEA has, at a minimum, designed and committed to implement no later than the 2014-15 school year--
    - i. a teacher evaluation system (as defined in this document);
    - ii. a principal evaluation system (as defined in this document);
    - iii. a LEA superintendent evaluation (as defined in this document); and
    - iv. a LEA school board evaluation (as defined in this document).
  - b. The LEA has a robust data system that has, at a minimum,--
    - i. An individual teacher identifier with a teacher-student match; and
    - ii. The ability to match student level P-12 and higher education data.
  - c. The LEA has policy and regulatory protections in place that ensure Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) compliant privacy and information protection while enabling access and use by stakeholders.
5. Required Signatures for the LEA or lead LEA in a consortium
  - a. Superintendent/CEO, local school board, and local union/association president (where applicable).

**Application Requirements:**

1. State comment period. Each LEA included in an application must provide its SEA five business days to comment on the application and submit as part of its application package--
  - a. The State's comments or evidence that the State declined to comment
  - b. The LEA's response to the State comment (optional)
2. Mayor, City or Town Administrator comment period. Each LEA included in an application must provide its Mayor or other comparable official five business days to comment on the LEA's application and submit as part of its application package—
  - a. The City or Town's comments
  - b. The LEA's response to the City or Town's comment (optional)
3. For applicants applying as a consortium, the application must--
  - a. Indicate, consistent with 34 CFR 75.128, whether--

- i. One member of the consortium is applying for a grant on behalf of the consortium; or
  - ii. The consortium has established itself as a separate eligible legal entity and is applying for a grant on its own behalf;
- b. Be signed by--
  - i. If one member of the consortium is applying for a grant on behalf of the consortium, the Superintendent/CEO, local School Board President, and local Union/Association President (where applicable) of that LEA; or
  - ii. If the consortium has established itself as a separate eligible legal entity and is applying for a grant on its own behalf, a representative of the consortium; and
- c. Include, consistent with 34 CFR 75.128, for each LEA in the consortium, copies of all Memoranda of Understanding or other binding agreements. These binding agreements must--
  - i. Detail the consortium governance structure (as defined in this document) and the individual LEA's role in the structure;
  - ii. Bind each member of the consortium to every statement and assurance made in the application;
  - iii. Include an assurance signed by the LEA's authorized legal representative that--
    1. The LEA has, at a minimum, designed and committed to implement no later than the 2014-15 school year--
      - a. a teacher evaluation system (as defined in this document);
      - b. a principal evaluation system (as defined in this document);
      - c. a LEA superintendent evaluation (as defined in this document); and
      - d. a LEA school board evaluation (as defined in this document).
    2. The LEA has a robust data system that has, at a minimum,--
      - a. An individual teacher identifier with a teacher-student match.; and
      - b. The ability to match student level P-12 and higher education data.
    3. The LEA has policy and regulatory protections in place that ensure Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) compliant privacy and information protection while enabling access and use by stakeholders; and
  - iv. Be signed by the Superintendent/CEO, local School Board President, and local Union/Association President (where applicable).

### **Absolute Priorities**

For FY 2012 and any subsequent year in which the Department makes awards from any list of unfunded applicants resulting from this competition, the Department will consider only applications that, consistent with 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3), meet Absolute Priority 1 and one of Absolute Priorities 2-5 described below. Each of the Absolute Priorities 2-5 constitutes its own funding category, and the Secretary intends to award grants under each category for which applications of sufficient quality are submitted. An applicant must address Absolute Priority 1 and identify which one of the Absolute Priorities 2 -5 contained in this document applies to the LEA or Consortium of LEAs. Full

applications will be peer reviewed and scored; scores will be rank ordered within each category. These Absolute Priorities are:

**Absolute Priority 1, Personalized Learning Environment(s):** To meet this priority, the LEA or consortium's application must coherently and comprehensively address how it will build on the four core educational assurance areas (as defined in this document) in Race to the Top to create student centered learning environment(s) that are designed to: significantly improve teaching and learning through the personalization of strategies, tools, and supports for teachers and students that are aligned with college- and career-ready standards (as defined in this document); increase the effectiveness of educators, and expand student access to the most effective educators in order to raise student achievement; decrease the achievement gap across student groups; and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.

**Absolute Priority 2, LEAs in Race to the Top States:** An LEA or a consortium of LEAs where more than 50 percent of participating students (as defined in this document) are in LEAs in States that received awards under the Race to the Top Phase 1, Phase 2, or Phase 3 competitions.

**Absolute Priority 3, Rural LEAs in Race to the Top States:** An LEA or a consortium of LEAs where more than 50 percent of participating students are in rural LEAs (as defined in the document) in States that received awards under the Race to the Top Phase 1, Phase 2, or Phase 3 competitions.

**Absolute Priority 4, LEAs in non-Race to the Top States:** An LEA or a consortium of LEAs where more than 50 percent of participating students are in LEAs in States that did not receive awards under the Race to the Top Phase 1, Phase 2, or Phase 3 competitions.

**Absolute Priority 5, Rural LEAs in non-Race to the Top States:** An LEA or a consortium of LEAs where more than 50 percent of participating students are in rural LEAs (as defined in the document) in States that did not receive awards under the Race to the Top Phase 1, Phase 2, or Phase 3 competitions.

### **Selection Criteria**

#### **A. Vision**

- 1) The extent to which the applicant has set forth a comprehensive and coherent reform vision that builds on its work in the four core educational assurance areas (as defined in this document) and articulates a clear and credible approach to the goal of advancing excellence and equity through personalized student and educator support.
- 2) The extent to which the applicant's vision will translate into increased improved student performance and equity as demonstrated by ambitious yet achievable annual goals, overall and by student subgroup (as defined in this document), for each participating LEA, in the following areas:
  - a. Performance on summative assessments (status and growth);
  - b. Decreasing the achievement gaps (as defined in this document);
  - c. Graduation rates (as defined in this document);
  - d. College enrollment (as defined in this document) rates;
  - e. Student attendance(as defined in this document); and

- f. Teacher attendance (as defined in this document).

## B. District Capacity and Success Factors

### Reform Conditions.

The extent to which each LEA has demonstrated evidence of--

- 1) A clear track record of success in the past four years in advancing excellence and equity, including a demonstrated ability to--
  - a) Improve student outcomes and close achievement gaps (as defined in this document), including by raising student achievement, high school graduation rates, and college-going rates;
  - b) Achieve ambitious and significant reforms via implementation of one or more of the four intervention models (as defined in this document) in its persistently lowest-achieving (PLA) (as defined in this document) or low-performing schools (as defined in this document); and
  - c) Make student performance data (as defined in this document) available to students, educators, and parents and use it to inform and improve instruction and services.
- 2) Increased “transparency” in LEA processes, practices, and investments, including making public, by school, actual school-level expenditures that are associated with regular K-12 instruction, instructional support, pupil support, and school administration. At a minimum, LEAs must report the following four categories of school-level expenditures from State and local funds:
  - a) Actual personnel salaries at the school level for all school-level instructional and support staff, based on the Census Bureau’s classification used in the F-33 survey of local government finances;
  - b) Actual personnel salaries at the school level for instructional staff only;
  - c) Actual personnel salaries at the school level for teachers only; and
  - d) Actual non-personnel expenditures at the school level (if available).
- 3) Meaningful stakeholder engagement and support, including:
  - a) A description of how families, teachers, and principals in participating schools (as defined in this document) have been engaged in the development of the proposal and, as appropriate, how the proposal has been revised based on their engagement and feedback; including,
    - i) For teachers in LEAs with collective bargaining representation, evidence of direct engagement and support for the proposals from teachers in participating schools (as defined in this document); or
    - ii) For teachers in LEAs without collective bargaining representation, at a minimum, evidence that at least 70 percent of teachers from participating schools (as defined in this document) support the proposal.
  - b) Letters of support from such key stakeholders as parents and parent organizations, student organizations, early learning programs, the business community, civil rights organizations, advocacy groups, local civic and community-based organizations, and/or institutions of higher education (IHEs).
- 4) A high-quality plan for:

Developing LEA capacity and supporting school-level implementation of the applicant's proposal, including a description of --

- a) The LEA's approach (e.g., schools, grade bands, or subject areas) to implementing the reform proposal in the LEA(s), including
  - i) a list of the schools that will participate in grant activities, or a description of the selection process that the LEA will use to select schools to participate to ensure that at least 40 percent of the participating students in the participating schools must be, on average, from low-income families; and
  - ii) the number of total participating students, participating high-needs students (as defined in this document) and participating educators.
- b) How the LEA central office, or the consortium governance structure (as defined in this document), will be organized to support and provide services to all participating schools;
- c) The State context(s) in which the LEA or consortium will be lawfully implementing the proposal, including a description of how the State affords participating LEAs and schools sufficient autonomy to implement the personalized learning environment(s) called for in the application; and
- d) How the implementation plan will translate into meaningful reform and support district-wide change beyond participating schools, and help the LEA reach its improvement goals (e.g., the applicant's logic model or theory of change of how this approach will improve student outcomes across all schools in the LEA).

### C. Preparing Students for College and Careers

The extent to which the applicant has a high-quality plan for improving teaching and learning by personalizing the learning environment(s) to enable all students to graduate college- and career-ready. This includes implementing instructional strategies for all participating students (as defined in this document) that enable each student to pursue a rigorous course of study, at his or her own pace and in ways that best support each student's learning needs. All participating students (as defined in this document), should be able to, or be on a trajectory to, demonstrate content and skills mastery and credentialing required for the State and LEA's college- and career-ready graduation requirements (as defined in this document). The quality of the plan will be determined based on the extent to which it addresses the following:

- 1) **Learning:** An approach to learning that engages and empowers all learners, in particular high-needs students, in an age appropriate manner, through the use of high-quality content aligned with college- and career-ready standards (as defined in this document), frequently updated data about individual student progress, and intervention support options.
  - a) With the support of parents, teachers, and other educational support specialists and personnel, students:
    - i. Understand the relevance of what they are learning to their lives and goals;
    - ii. Define learning and development goals linked to college- and career-ready standards (as defined in this document), understand how to structure their learning to achieve them, and measure progress towards those goals;

- iii. Identify and access multiple ways of learning, such as self-driven, peer-driven, instructor-driven, and collaborative ways;
  - iv. Are able to be involved in learning experiences in areas of personal interest; and
  - v. Develop skills such as goal-setting, teamwork, critical thinking, communication, creativity, and problem-solving, in addition to mastery of critical content.
- b) With the support of parents, teachers, and other educational support specialists and personnel, students are provided the strategies and tools to advance, track, and manage their learning, including:
- i. A variety of high-quality instructional approaches and environments matching learning and development goals with individual student performance, optimal learning approaches (e.g., discussion, project-based learning, videos, audio, manipulative), and interests;
  - ii. High-quality content, including digital learning content (as defined in this document) as appropriate, aligned with college- and career-ready standards (as defined in this document);
  - iii. Use of a personalized learning plan (as defined in this document) that includes the provision of ongoing and regular feedback, including, at a minimum:
    1. Frequently updated individual student data that can be used to determine progress toward mastery of college- and career-ready standards (as defined in this document) and competencies; and
    2. Personalized learning recommendations based on a student's current knowledge and skills aligned with college- and career-ready standards (as defined in this document), and available content, instructional approaches, and supports; and
  - iv. Accommodations and evidence-based strategies for high-needs students (as defined in this document) to ensure they are on-track toward meeting college- and career-ready graduation requirements (as defined in this document).
- c) Mechanisms are in place to provide training and support to students to ensure that they understand how to use the tools and resources provided in order to track and manage their learning.
- 2) **Teaching.** An approach to teaching that empowers educators to improve instruction and increase effectiveness at supporting student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready graduation requirements (as defined in this document) by enabling the full implementation of personalized teaching and learning for all students.
- a) All participating educators participate in professional teams or communities and training that support their individual and collective capacity to:
- i. Support effective implementation of personalized learning plans (as defined in this document) that are aligned with the goal of college- and career-ready graduation and enable the adaptation of instruction based on individual student academic needs, preferences, and interests;

- ii. Adapt instruction in response to academic needs, optimal learning approaches (e.g., discussion, project-based learning, videos, audio, manipulative), and interests of students;
  - iii. Frequently measure student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready graduation requirements (as defined in this document);
  - iv. Capture resulting student performance data in a way that informs both the acceleration of student progress and the improvement of the individual and collective practice of educators;
  - v. Use data and tools for personalized learning to develop plans for each student and to manage how groups of students accelerate their progress toward meeting college- and career-ready graduation requirements (as defined in this document); and
  - vi. Improve educators' practice by using feedback provided by the LEA's teacher and principal evaluation systems (as defined in this document), including frequent feedback on their individual and collective effectiveness (as defined in this document), as well as recommendations for how to improve.
- b) All participating educators have access to and know how to use tools, data, and resources to accelerate student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready graduation requirements (as defined in this document). Those resources must include:
- i. Actionable information that helps educators identify and respond to individual student academic needs, optimal learning approaches, and interests;
  - ii. High-quality learning resources (e.g., instructional content and assessments), including digital resources, as appropriate, that are aligned with college- and career-ready standards (as defined in this document), and the tools to create and share new resources; and
  - iii. Processes and tools to match student needs (2.b.i) with specific resources and approaches (2.b.ii) and to provide continuously improving feedback about the effectiveness of the resources.
- c) All participating school leaders and school leadership teams (as defined in this document) have policies, tools, data, and resources to structure schools as effective learning environments that meet individual student academic needs and accelerate student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready graduation requirements (as defined in this document), including:
- i. Sufficient flexibility and autonomy over such factors as school schedules and calendars, school staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators and non-educators, and school-level budgets;
  - ii. Actionable information, from such sources as the district's teacher evaluation system, that helps them identify and take steps to increase individual and collective educator effectiveness, as well as school culture and climate, for the purpose of continuous school improvement; and

- iii. Expectations, systems, and practices to continuously improve school progress toward identified goals of increased student performance and the closure of achievement gaps (as defined in this document).
- 3) ***Policy and Infrastructure.*** Comprehensive policies and infrastructure for learning that provide every student, educator, and level of the education system (e.g., classroom, school, and LEA) with the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed, including:
- a) The extent to which the LEAs have practices, policies, and rules that enable personalized learning through--
    - i. Learning resources and instructional practices that are fully accessible, including for students with disabilities and English learners;
    - ii. The opportunity for students to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, not the amount of time spent on a topic; and
    - iii. The opportunity for students to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways.
  - b) The extent to which the LEA and school infrastructure supports personalized learning through--
    - i. Ensuring that all participating students, parents educators and other stakeholders (as appropriate and relevant to students' teaching and learning) have equitable and sustainable access, regardless of income, to content, tools, and other learning resources both in-school and out-of-school;
    - ii. Ensuring students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders (as appropriate and relevant to students' teaching and learning) have appropriate levels of technical support which may be provided through a range of strategies (e.g., peer support, online, or local support);
    - iii. Using information systems that maintain student data and provide the capability for parents and students to export their information in an open data format (as defined in this document) that allows them to use the data in other electronic learning systems (such as electronic tutors, tools that make recommendations for additional learning supports, or software that securely stores personal records); and
    - iv. Ensuring that LEAs and schools use interoperable data systems (e.g., human resources, student information, and budget data systems) (as defined in this document).

4) ***Performance Measurement:***

*NOTE: The Department is particularly interested in seeking public input and suggestions on rigorous, relevant, and actionable performance measures that will assist grantees and the Department in managing both leading indicators of implementation success and outcome measures of performance.*

The extent to which the applicant has established annual ambitious yet achievable annual targets for:

- a) The number and percentage of participating students, by subgroup (as defined by this document), who have daily access to effective and highly effective educators (as defined in Race to the Top);
- b) The number and percentage of participating students, by subgroup, who are on-track to college- and career-readiness based on the LEA on-track indicator (as defined in this document);
- c) The number and percentage of participating students, by subgroup, who were not on-track at the beginning of the school year but who have caught up by the end of the school year based on the LEA on-track indicator (as defined in this document);
- d) The percentage of participating students who access their personalized learning plan (as defined in this document) on a weekly basis;
- e) The graduation rate (as defined in this document) of participating high-needs students (as defined in this document);
- f) The number and percentage of participating educators who complete a survey on working conditions; and
- g) The number and percentage of participating students who complete a student survey (as defined in this document).

#### **D. Transition Plan and Continuous Improvement**

The extent to which the applicant has a--

- 1) Clear and thoughtful transition plan, including:
  - a) A complete analysis of its current status in supporting learners by personalizing the learning environment(s), including identification of existing needs and gaps which are addressed by the project plan; and
  - b) A high-quality plan, including timeline, deliverables, and most substantial risks and appropriate mitigation of those risks, for phasing in elements of the plan over the grant period.
- 2) Plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals, including in hard-to-staff schools, subjects, and specialty areas, such as mathematics, science, and special education;
- 3) High-quality plan for communication with both internal and external stakeholders; and
- 4) Strategy for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process that provides timely and regular feedback on progress towards project goals and opportunities for ongoing corrections during and after the term of the grant. This must include how the applicant will monitor, measure, and publicly share the quality of its Race to the Top District funded investments, such as professional development, technology and staff.

## **E. Budget and Sustainability**

The extent to which--

- 1) The applicant's budget, which includes all funds that will support the project (e.g., Race to the Top grant; external foundation support; local, State, and other Federal funds; or other support)--
  - a) Is reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the applicant's proposal; and
  - b) Clearly provides a thoughtful investment and prioritization rationale, including a description of all of the funds (e.g., Race to the Top grant; external foundation support; local, State, and other Federal funds; or other support) that the applicant will use to support the implementation of the proposal, including total revenue from these sources and identification of which funds will be used for one-time investments versus ongoing operational costs that will be needed during and after the grant period, as described in the proposed budget and budget narrative;
- 2) The applicant will take specific steps to evaluate the effectiveness of Race to the Top District funded investments, such as professional development, technology, and staff and more productively use time, staff, money, or other resources in order to improve results, through such strategies such as improved use of technology, working with community partners, compensation reform, and modification of school schedules and structures (e.g., service delivery, leadership teams and decision-making structures); and
- 3) The applicant has a high-quality plan for sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant, including a 3-year post-grant budget (including budget assumptions, potential sources, and uses of funds).

## **F. Optional Budget Supplement**

An eligible applicant may apply for additional funding (beyond the applicable maximum level provided in the table below (under Program Requirements) and up to a maximum of \$ 2 million) to address a specific area that is supplemental to the applicant's plan for addressing Absolute Priority 1. Applications for this funding will be judged on the extent to which the applicant has a clear, discrete, and innovative solution that can be replicated in schools across the nation. In determining the extent to which the request for an optional budget supplement addresses this goal, the Department will consider--

- 1) The rationale for the specific area or population that the applicant will address (e.g., data systems, predictive algorithms, content tagging schemes, new curriculum and online supports for students re-entering school from the juvenile justice system, or a credit recovery program design to support newly entering English learners into secondary school) and the quality and feasibility of the proposal for addressing that area;
- 2) How the activities the applicant would carry out relevant to this specific area or population would clearly be co-developed and shared across two or more LEAs (participating or non-participating); and

- 3) The likelihood that the proposed budget supplement (up to \$2 million) is adequate to support the development and implementation of activities that meet the requirements of this document, including the reasonableness of the costs in relation to the objectives, design, and significance of the proposed activities project and the number of students to be served.

### **Competitive Preference Priority—Results, Resource Alignment, and Integrated Services**

An applicant receives points under this priority based on the extent to which it integrates public and private resources to augment the schools' core resources by providing additional student and family supports, such as addressing the social-emotional, behavioral, and other needs of the participating students (as defined in this document), giving highest priority to those students in high-needs schools. A reform proposal does not need to be comprehensive, but could address a subset of these needs.

In determining the extent to which the applicant meets this priority, the Department will consider--

(1) Whether the applicant has formed a coherent and sustainable partnership with public and private organizations, such as public health, after-school, and social service providers; businesses, philanthropies, civic groups, and other community-based organizations; early learning programs; and post-secondary institutions to support the plan described in Absolute Priority 1. The partnership must identify not more than 10 population-level desired results for students in the LEA or consortium of LEAs, which may span from cradle to career, that align with the applicant's proposal and reform strategy. The results must include both educational results and other education outcomes (e.g., children enter kindergarten prepared to succeed in school, children exit 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading at grade level, and students graduate from high school college- and career-ready) and education and family and community results (e.g., students demonstrate social-emotional competencies, students are healthy, students feel safe at school and in their communities, students demonstrate career readiness skills through internship and summer job opportunities).

(2) How the partnership would--

- i. track the selected indicator(s) that measure each result at the aggregate level for all children within the LEA or consortium, and at the student-level data for the participating students (as defined in this document);
- ii. use the data to target its resources to improve results for each participating student (as defined in this document), with special emphasis on students facing significant challenges, such as students with disabilities, English learners, and students affected by impacts of poverty or family instability;
- iii. develop a strategy to scale the model beyond the participating students (as defined in this document) to at least other high-needs students (as defined in this document) and communities in the region over time; and
- iv. improve results over time;

(3) How the partnership will enable, within participating schools (as defined in this document), the integration of education and other services (e.g., services that address social-emotional, behavioral, and other special needs) for participating students (as defined in this document).

(4) How the partnership will build the capacity of staff in participating schools (as defined in this document) by providing them with tools and supports to--

- i. assess the needs and assets of participating students that are aligned with the goals for improving the education and family and community results identified by the partnership;
- ii. identify and inventory the needs and assets of the school and community that are aligned with the goals for improving the education and family and community results identified by the partnership;
- iii. create a decision-making process and infrastructure to select, implement, and evaluate solutions that address the individual needs of participating students (as defined in this document) and support improved results;
- iv. engage parents and families of participating students in both decision-making about solutions and in addressing student, family, and school needs; and
- v. routinely assess the partnership's implementation progress and resolve challenges and problems.

(5) The extent to which the applicant has established annual ambitious yet achievable goals and performance measures for the proposed population-level desired results for students.

### **Program Requirements:**

1. Budget requirements: For the Race to the Top District competition, the applicants' budget must conform to the following budget ranges:

Number of participating students	Budget range
2500-5000	\$15-20 million
5001-9999	\$17-22 million
10,000+	\$20-25 million

The Department will not consider an application that proposes a budget outside its budget range.

2. A grantee must comply with the requirements, including providing timely and complete access to any and all data collected by the LEA (e.g., participation, performance, demographic data) to the Department or its designated monitors, technical assistance providers, or research partners. Additionally, consistent with 34 CFR section 80.36 and state and local procurement procedures, grantees must include in contracts with external vendors provisions that allow implementation data to be made available to the LEA, Department or its designated monitor, technical assistance provider, or research partners in ways consistent with all privacy laws and regulations.
3. Information (metadata) about content alignment and use is shared through open-standard registries (as defined in this document).
4. Districts where minority students or students with disabilities are overly-represented in discipline and expulsion rates (according to data submitted through the Civil Rights Data Collection) must undergo a district assessment of the root cause and develop a plan over the grant period to address root causes.
5. Work with the Department to develop a FERPA-compliant strategy to make all implementation and student-level data (FERPA compliant) available to the Department or its designated monitors, technical assistance providers, or research partners.

6. Grantees must make Requests for Information (RFIs) and Requests for Proposal (RFPs) public and open for other LEAs, consistent with the requirements of State and local law.
7. Within 100 days of award, participating schools must develop an individual school implementation plan.
8. Within 100 days of award, grantees will demonstrate that at least 40 percent of the participating students (as defined in this document) in the participating schools (as defined in this document) are from low-income families, based on eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch subsidies under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, or other poverty measures that LEAs use to make awards under section 1113(a) of the ESEA.

**Definitions:**

**Achievement gap:** The difference in the performance between each ESEA subgroup (as defined in this document) within a participating LEA or school and the statewide average performance of the LEA's or State's highest achieving subgroups in reading/language arts and mathematics as measured by the assessments required under the ESEA.

**College- and career-ready graduation requirements:** Minimum high school graduation expectations (e.g., completion of a minimum course of study, content mastery, proficiency on college- and career-ready assessments, etc.) that include rigorous, robust, and well-rounded curriculum aligned with college- and career-ready standards (as defined in this document) that cover a wide range of academic and technical knowledge and skills to ensure that students leave high school ready for college and careers.

**College- and career-ready standards:** Content standards for kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade that build towards college- and career-ready graduation requirements (as defined in this document) by the time of high school graduation. A State's college- and career-ready standards must be either (1) standards that are common to a significant number of States; or (2) standards that are approved by a State network of institutions of higher education, which must certify that students who meet the standards will not need remedial course work at the postsecondary level.

**College enrollment:** The enrollment in college of students who graduate from high school consistent with 34 CFR 200.19(b)(1) and who enroll in an institution of higher education (as defined in section 101 of the Higher Education Act, P.L. 105-244, 20 U.S.C. 1001) within 16 months of graduation.

**Consortium governance structure:** The consortium's structure for carrying out its operations, including--

- (i) The organizational structure of the consortium and the differentiated roles that a member LEA may hold (e.g., lead LEA, fiscal agent);
- (ii) For each differentiated role, the rights and responsibilities (including adopting and implementing the consortium's proposal for a grant) associated with the role;
- (iii) The consortium's method and process (e.g., consensus, majority) for making different types of decisions (e.g., policy, operational);
- (iv) The protocols by which the consortium will operate, including the protocols for member LEAs to change roles or leave the consortium;
- (v) The consortium's plan for managing funds received under the requested this grant;
- (vi) The terms and conditions of the Memoranda of Understanding or other binding agreements executed by each member LEA, including the consistency of the terms and conditions with the consortium's governance structure and the LEA's role in the consortium; and
- (vii) The consortium's procurement process, and evidence of each member LEA's commitment to that process.

**Core educational assurance areas:**

- Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy;

- Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction;
- Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and
- Turning around our lowest-achieving schools.

**Digital learning content:** Learning materials and resources that can be displayed on a digital device and shared electronically with other users. Digital learning content includes both open and or commercial content. In order to comply with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, any digital learning content used by grantees must be accessible to individuals with disabilities, including individuals who use screen readers. For additional information regarding their application to technology, please refer to [www.ed.gov/ocr/letters/colleague-201105-ese.pdf](http://www.ed.gov/ocr/letters/colleague-201105-ese.pdf) and [www.ed.gov/ocr/docs/dcl-ebook-faq-201105.pdf](http://www.ed.gov/ocr/docs/dcl-ebook-faq-201105.pdf).

**Educators:** All education professionals and paraprofessionals working in participating schools (as defined in this document), including principals or other heads of a school, teachers, other professional instructional staff (e.g. staff involved in curriculum development, staff development, or operating library, media and computer centers), pupil support services staff (e.g. guidance counselors, nurses, speech pathologists, etc.), other administrators (e.g. assistant principals, discipline specialists.), and paraprofessionals (e.g. assistant teachers, instructional aides).

**Graduation rate:** The four-year or extended-year adjusted cohort graduation rate as defined by 34 CFR 200.19(b)(1).

**High-needs students:** Students at risk of educational failure or otherwise in need of special assistance and support, such as students who are living in poverty, who attend high-minority schools (as defined in the Race to the Top application), who are far below grade level, who have left school before receiving a regular high school diploma, who are at risk of not graduating with a diploma on time, who are homeless, who are in foster care, who have been incarcerated, who have disabilities, or who are English learners.

**Interoperable data system:** System that uses common, established structure such that data can easily flow from one system to another and in which data are in a non-proprietary, open format.

**Local educational agency:** As defined in ESEA, a public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a State for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform a service function for, public elementary schools or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a State, or for a combination of school districts or counties that is recognized in a State as an administrative agency for its public elementary schools or secondary schools.

**Low-performing schools:** Schools that are in the bottom 10 percent of performance in the State, or who have significant achievement gaps, based on student academic performance in reading/language arts and mathematics on the assessments required under the ESEA or graduation rates (as defined in this document).

**Metadata about content alignment:** Information about how digital learning content assesses, teaches, and depends on (requires) common content standards such as State academic standards.

**On-track indicator:** A measure, available at a time sufficiently early to allow for intervention, of a single student characteristic (e.g., number of days absent, number of discipline referrals, number of credits earned), or a composite of multiple characteristics, that is both predictive of student success (e.g., students demonstrating the measure graduate at an 80 percent rate) and comprehensive of students who succeed (e.g., of all graduates, 90 percent demonstrated the indicator). Using multiple indicators that are collectively comprehensive but vary by student characteristics may be an appropriate alternative to a single indicator that applies to all students.

**Open data format:** Data which is available in a non-proprietary, machine-readable format such that it can be understood by a computer (such as XML and JSON formats). Digital formats which require extraction, data translation such as optical character recognition, or other manipulation in order to be used in electronic systems are not machine-readable formats.

**Open-standard registry:** A platform, such as The Learning Registry, that facilitates the exchange of (1) metadata about content alignment and (2) information about how digital learning content is being used by educators in diverse learning environments across the web.

**Participating schools:** Schools that are identified by the LEA or consortium and choose to work with the LEA to implement the LEA(s)' Race to the Top plan, either in a specific grade span or subject area or in the entire school.

**Participating students:** Students enrolled in a participating school (as defined in this document), grades, or subject areas and directly served by a Race to the Top District plan.

**Persistently lowest-achieving schools:** As determined by the State, consistent with the requirements of the School Improvement Grants program authorized by section 1003(g) of the ESEA,

- (i) Any Title I school in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that (a) Is among the lowest-achieving five percent of Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring or the lowest-achieving five Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring in the State, whichever number of schools is greater; or (b) Is a high school that has had a graduation rate as defined in 34 CFR 200.19(b) that is less than 60 percent over a number of years; and
- (ii) Any secondary school that is eligible for, but does not receive, Title I funds that (a) Is among the lowest-achieving five percent of secondary schools or the lowest-achieving five secondary schools in the State that are eligible for, but do not receive, Title I funds, whichever number of schools is greater; or (b) Is a high school that has had a graduation rate as defined in 34 CFR 200.19(b) that is less than 60 percent over a number of years.
- (iii) To identify the lowest-achieving schools, a State must take into account both (i) The academic achievement of the “all students” group in a school in terms of proficiency on the State’s assessments under section 1111(b)(3) of the ESEA in reading/language arts and mathematics combined; and (ii) The school’s lack of progress on those assessments over a number of years in the “all students” group.

**Personalized learning plan:** A formal document, available in digital and other formats both in and out of school to students, parents, and teachers, that, at a minimum: establishes student learning goals based on academic and career objectives and personal interests; sequences content and skill development to achieve those learning goals and ensure that a student can graduate on-time college- and career-ready; and is updated based on information about student performance on a variety of activities and assessments that indicate progress towards goals.

**Principal evaluation system:** A system that: (1) will be used for continual improvement of instruction; (2) meaningfully differentiates performance using at least three performance levels; (3) uses multiple valid measures in determining performance levels, including as a significant factor data on student growth(as defined in this document) for all students (including English learners and students with disabilities), and other measures of professional practice (which may be gathered through multiple formats and sources, such as observations based on rigorous leadership performance standards, teacher evaluation data, and student and parent surveys); (4) evaluates principals on a regular basis; (5) provides clear, timely, and useful feedback, including feedback that identifies needs for and guides professional development; and (6) will be used to inform personnel decisions.

**School board evaluation:** An assessment of the LEA school board that both evaluates performance and encourages professional growth. This evaluation system rating should reflect both (1) the feedback of many stakeholders, including but not limited to educators and parents; and (2) student outcomes performance in order to provide a detailed and accurate picture of the board's performance.

**School leadership team:** A team that is composed of the principal or other head of a school, teachers and other educators, and, as applicable, other school employees, parents, students, and other community members, and leads the implementation of improvement and other initiatives at the school. In cases where statute or local policy, including collective bargaining agreements, call for such a body, that body shall serve the school leadership team for the purpose of this program.

**Student attendance:** During the regular school year, the average percentage of days that students are present for school. Students should not be considered present for excused absences, unexcused absences, or any period of time that they are out of their regularly assigned classrooms due to discipline measures (i.e., in- or out-of-school suspension).

**Student survey:** Measures students' perspectives on teaching, learning, and related supports in their classrooms and schools. The surveys must be research-based, valid, and reliable. Over time these results should be predictive of rates of student growth.

**Student Growth:** The change in student achievement for an individual student between two or more points in time, defined as—

1. For grades and subjects in which assessments are required under ESEA section 1111(b)(3):  
(1) a student's score on such assessments and (2) other measures of student learning, such as those described in the second bullet, provided they are rigorous and comparable across schools within an LEA.
2. For grades and subjects in which assessments are not required under ESEA section 1111(b)(3): alternative measures of student learning and performance, such as student

results on pre-tests, end-of-course tests, and objective performance-based assessments; performance against student learning objectives; student performance on English language proficiency assessments; and other measures of student achievement that are rigorous and comparable across schools within an LEA.

**Student-level data:** Demographic, performance, and other information that pertains to a single student but cannot be attributed to a specific student.

**Student performance data:** Information about the academic progress of a single student, such as formative and summative assessment data, coursework, instructor observations, information about student engagement and time on task, and similar information.

**Subgroup:** Each category of students identified under ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II).

**Superintendent evaluation:** Rigorous, transparent, and fair annual evaluation for the LEA superintendent that provides an assessment of performance and encourages professional growth. This evaluation rating should reflect (1) the feedback of many stakeholders, including but not limited to educators, principals, and parents; and (2) student outcomes performance in order to provide a detailed and accurate picture of the superintendent's performance.

**Teacher attendance:** During the regular school year, the average percentage of days that teachers are present when they would otherwise be expected to be teaching students in an assigned class. Teachers should not be considered present for days taken for sick leave and/or personal leave. Personal leave includes voluntary absences for reasons other than sick leave.

**Teacher evaluation system:** System that: (1) will be used for continual improvement of instruction; (2) meaningfully differentiates performance using at least three performance levels; (3) uses multiple valid measures in determining performance levels, including as a significant factor data on student growth (as defined in this document) for all students (including English learners and students with disabilities), and other measures of professional practice (which may be gathered through multiple formats and sources, such as observations based on rigorous teacher performance standards, teacher portfolios, and student and parent surveys); (4) evaluates teachers on a regular basis; (5) provide clear, timely, and useful feedback, including feedback that identifies needs and guides professional development; and (6) will be used to inform personnel decisions.

**Turnaround strategy:** As defined by the School Improvement Grant (SIG) regulations, published in the *Federal Register* on October 28, 2010 (75 FR 66363), turnaround model, restart model, school closure, or transformational model.